

# THE SMALLER BIRDS

COUNTY DEPARTMENT  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
FORT WAYNE & ALLEN CO., IND.

D138

Daglish  
Smaller birds

C85900

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

of  
Fort Wayne and Allen County, Ind.  
Information For Country Borrowers

Books are free to all residents of Allen County. They may be borrowed from the Main Library at Fort Wayne or from any Branch, Reading Room, Deposit Station or School Library in Allen County.

Books will be sent by parcel post, prepaid to any borrower living a distance from a Library Station.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT  
ANTHONY 3333


WITHDRAWN  
3 1833 04389 1214

3 1833 04389 1214









Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2011

<http://www.archive.org/details/smallerbirds00dagl>

# ANIMALS IN BLACK AND WHITE

- I. THE LARGER BEASTS
- II. THE SMALLER BEASTS
- III. THE LARGER BIRDS
- IV. THE SMALLER BIRDS
- V. REPTILES
- VI. FISHES AND SEA ANIMALS

## VOLUME FOUR THE SMALLER BIRDS



THE KINGFISHER



# THE SMALLER BIRDS

---



by  
ERIC FITCH DAGLISH

NEW YORK  
WILLIAM MORROW & COMPANY

5598.2  
II 135

To  
JEANNETTE

*All rights reserved*

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1928

*Printed in Great Britain*

# CONTENTS

	PAGE		PAGE
THE ROBIN . . .	9	THE PIED FLYCATCHER . . .	29
THE TOMTIT . . .	11	THE PIED WAGTAIL . . .	31
THE BLACKBIRD . . .	13	THE SWALLOW . . .	33
THE KINGFISHER . . .	15	THE DIPPER . . .	35
THE BEE-EATER . . .	17	THE DRONGO . . .	37
THE GOLDCREST . . .	19	THE TAILOR BIRD . . .	39
THE MOTMOT . . .	21	THE PRATINCOLE . . .	41
THE JACANA . . .	23	THE GOLDFINCH . . .	43
THE HUIA BIRD . . .	25	THE HAWFINCH . . .	45
THE STONECHAT . . .	27	THE HUMMING BIRD . . .	47

85900  
C85900







## THE ROBIN

THE Robin or Redbreast is probably the best known and the most generally loved of all British birds. His perky appearance, cheery song and the friendly disposition he shows towards man have gained for him a unique place in our affections. The Robin is found in all parts of the British Isles, and is abundant both in the open country and in the neighbourhood of houses. He seems to have an instinctive trust in man, and in gardens this bird has the habit of attending the gardener in his work and pouncing on worms and grubs as they are turned up by the spade, hopping with perfect confidence even between the feet of the worker. The song of the Robin is both rich and varied. It may be heard throughout the year, but it is especially noticeable in the autumn and winter when so many of our other songsters are silent. The Robin feeds principally on worms and insects, but is also fond of berries and other soft fruit. In the winter, when the weather is severe, he will devour almost any kind of scraps and even seed. The nest of the Robin is built in a hole, either in a wall, bank or tree, though occasionally the interior of a letter-box or old can is used for this purpose. Leaves, grass and moss are the materials selected for building, and the inside is lined with hair and feathers. The eggs are white, spotted with red and five are usually laid to a clutch.



## THE TOMTIT

THE Tits are the acrobats of the bird world. Hang a piece of fat or cokernut outside your window and watch the strange antics of these little birds as they try to get at the choicer morsels. They are very jealous, and will drive off any other birds which try to share the feast. In the British Isles there are several different kinds of Tits, of which the Great Tit, shown in the picture, is the largest. He is a very beautiful little fellow, with a jet black cap on his head and white cheeks. The breast and underpart are yellow with the exception of a bib under the chin and a streak running down the middle, which are black. The rest of the plumage shows several shades of green and blue. The Tomtit has a large appetite and is not very particular as to the kind of food with which it satisfies its hunger. All kinds of insects and spiders are eaten, and nuts are especially liked. The Great Tit places its nest in any hole which is handy, filling the cavity with leaves and moss and lining the whole with hair or feathers. It will often make use of the most unlikely places, as when it builds in an old boot that has been discarded, in the spout of a pump or in a scarecrow! The eggs are white with reddish spots and sometimes as many as twelve are laid by one bird.





## THE BLACKBIRD

THE Blackbird is one of the best known of British songsters. Its song is loud and flute-like, and is uttered from early morning till late at night during the spring and summer months. On mild days in mid-winter, too, it may sometimes be heard, alike in gardens, in the open country and in the depths of woods. Despite its name it is only the male Blackbird which is really black, the hen is dark brown with dusky mottlings on the breast. The food of the Blackbird consists of worms, insects, small slugs and snails, as well as fruit, particularly strawberries, cherries and pears. In the summer months it does a good deal of damage in orchards by pecking the ripe fruit, indeed while it can get this form of food it seems to prefer it to anything else. In the winter it is often to be seen in gardens and woods turning over the fallen leaves in search of insects, and may be found thus engaged when the snow lies thick on the ground. The nest of the Blackbird is built of grass, leaves and moss, held together with mud and with an inner lining of grass. It is placed either in a tree or a bush and is usually near the ground. The eggs are four or five in number, bluish green in colour, spotted and freckled with reddish brown.



## THE KINGFISHER

No one can see a Kingfisher as it flashes by on outspread wings, a brilliant streak of sapphire blue, without being struck by its beauty. This beauty the bird owes, not to its shape, which is anything but graceful, but to the remarkable colour of its plumage. The whole of the upper parts of this bird are brilliant metallic blue, the under parts rich chestnut, with the exception of the chin and the sides of the neck which are pure white. The long beak is black and the legs red. The Kingfisher lives by the sides of rivers and streams, feeding on fish, which it catches by darting with lightning-like rapidity into the water after its prey. It also eats water insects of various kinds. For nesting purposes the Kingfisher digs a tunnel in the bank of the stream or river by which it lives, or takes possession of a hole which it finds ready made. Here the six or seven pure white eggs are laid. The hole or tunnel is not lined, but the eggs are placed on a sort of platform composed of fish bones—the remains of meals eaten by the parent birds.





## THE BEE-EATER

THIS very beautiful bird is probably the most brilliantly-coloured of all the birds which visit the shores of Great Britain. Unfortunately, the Bee-eater is not a regular visitor to these islands, neither does it nest here, but from time to time a few come to us for short stays both in the spring and autumn. Normally the Bee-eater breeds in Asia, North Africa and the more southerly and warmer countries of Europe. It nests in colonies, digging holes in the banks of rivers and quarries where the soil is soft enough to be picked out, laying pure white eggs. Its food consists of insects, but, as its name implies, it is particularly fond of bees, and where bees are kept in hives in the countries in which these birds are common, they are very much disliked by the bee-keepers on account of the large numbers of bees which they destroy. The Bee-eater is a rather large bird, measuring about a foot from its long, curved beak to the tip of its tail. The upper parts are chestnut and orange-brown with the wings and underparts dark and pale blue. The throat is yellow, bordered by a black band, and the central pair of the green tail-feathers are prolonged and taper into black points.



## THE GOLDCREST

THE Goldcrest can claim the distinction of being the smallest of European birds. It measures but three and a half inches in total length. The general colour of its plumage is olive-green fading to a dull cream on the underparts. It is a comparatively common bird in the more wooded parts of the British Isles although it is rarely seen. The reason it is seldom noticed is partly on account of its small size, but more particularly because it prefers the interior of woods to more open country, and keeps mostly to the tops of the trees among which it lives. The food of the Goldcrest consists of small insects and spiders, which it hunts in the air and searches for among the leaves and in the crannies in the bark of trees and shrubs. The nest of the Goldcrest is a very beautiful little structure having the form of a basket of green moss held together with spider-silk and cosily lined with feathers. It is usually suspended from the branch of a fir-tree but may sometimes be found in a bush or among ivy. A large number of eggs are laid by this tiny bird, as many as twelve having been found in one nest. In colour the eggs are white or cream, finely spotted with reddish-brown.





## THE MOTMOT

THE Motmots—for there are several different kinds—are strange birds which live in Central and South America. They are all brightly coloured and most of them have very long tails. Indeed the tail of the Motmot forms its most interesting feature, for, as though dissatisfied with the shape which nature has given it, the bird is constantly trying to change its appearance by nibbling at the two central feathers, which are longer than the rest. As soon as the tail has grown, the Motmot bites at the webs on either side of the shaft until a bare space is left and each of the two longest feathers appears to end in a sort of racket-shaped tuft. This strange performance is repeated each time the bird moults, so that the Motmot never wears its natural tail! Motmots make their nests at the end of long twisting tunnels which they dig for themselves by means of their beaks. These nesting tunnels are often as much as six feet long with a round chamber at the end. On the floor of the chamber a few pieces of sticks are scattered and the eggs are laid on this rough platform. Motmots are fairly large birds measuring from fifteen to eighteen inches in length. They feed on insects.



## THE JACANA

THE strange looking birds called Jacanas are found in the tropical parts of Africa, Asia and America. In general shape they resemble slender Moorhens and, like those birds they live by the sides of streams and swamps. In comparison with the other parts of the body the feet are of enormous size and do not seem to belong to the birds at all. But these huge feet, with their long, thin toes, are very useful to the Jacana, for they enable it to walk and run over the floating leaves of water-plants without sinking. As they trip lightly and swiftly over the weed-grown surface of the water, hunting for the water insects and other small creatures on which they feed, these birds present a very graceful appearance. The nest of the Jacana is a large structure built either very near to, or actually in, the water. It is composed of the leaves and stems of water-plants. These birds have a rapid but very irregular flight and utter a loud, harsh call-note.



## THE HUIA BIRD

THE Huia is a black bird with ivory beak and bright orange wattles, or patches of naked skin, on its face. It is only found in a few districts in New Zealand. These birds feed on the grubs of certain large beetles which burrow into rotten wood. The most remarkable thing about the Huia Bird is that the male and female have beaks of totally different shapes. As may be seen from the picture on the opposite page, in the male bird, although the beak is fairly long, it is straight and sharply pointed. But the female has a much longer beak, which is very thin and curved sharply downwards. The reason for this difference between the sexes is difficult to understand until the birds are seen feeding. In their search for food the male picks out the wood from the tree trunk in which its prey lies concealed, until its burrows are laid bare. But these burrows often curve about through the wood and the straight bill of the male is unable to reach the grub at the bottom of the curved tunnel. In such circumstances the female lends her aid and by inserting her slender, curved bill soon extracts the plump grub. The Huia lives in dense forests, where it nests in holes in trees and lays white eggs.





## THE STONECHAT

THIS stout little bird is a lover of commons and heaths where gorse and heather abound. In the British Isles it is found most abundantly in moorland country. It is not at all shy and may often be seen perched on the topmost branch of a gorse-bush or on a post, watching for passing insects and singing its jerky little song. Flies and moths are particularly favoured as articles of food, and despite his stout build the Stonechat catches many of these active insects on the wing, twisting and turning in the air with surprising ease. Beetles, worms and similar creatures are also caught and eaten. The cock bird is very handsome, with black head, throat and back, dark brown wings and tail and rich chestnut underparts shading to creamy white. The black on the face and throat is surrounded with white and there is a patch of the same colour on each wing. The hen is much duller in colour than her mate. The Stonechat builds its nest at the foot of a gorse-bush or in a patch of heather, using moss and grass for the outer wall and fine roots, hair, and sometimes feathers, for the lining. Five eggs are laid, which are pale blue or greenish, with faint frecklings of reddish brown.



## THE PIED FLYCATCHER

THIS pretty little black and white bird is a summer visitor to Great Britain. It arrives sometime in April and leaves for Africa, where the winter months are spent, during September. Though not a rare bird in the north of England, Wales and the south of Scotland, it is seldom met with in other parts of the British Isles. When seen it may be easily recognised by its striking plumage of glossy black and pure white. From its name one would suppose that its food consisted entirely of flies of various kinds, but actually it seems to live principally on beetles and grubs, which it hunts for on the ground, though it also catches flying insects in the air. The nest is generally built in a hole in a tree trunk and is composed of moss and grass with a little hair as lining. The eggs are laid about the end of May. In colour these are clear, pale blue and five or six are usually found to a clutch. The female Pied Flycatcher, unlike her mate, is dark brown and dingy white in colour.





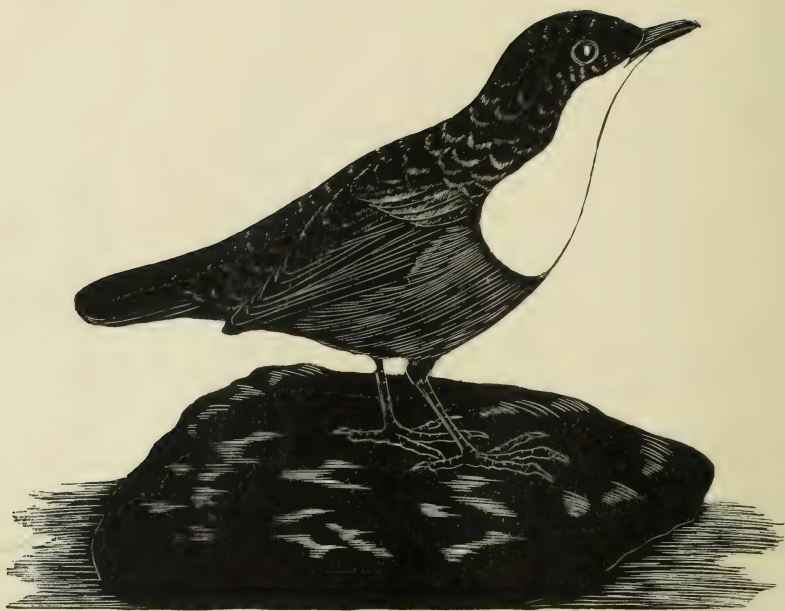
## THE PIED WAGTAIL

WAGTAILS get their name from their habit of swinging their tails, with an up and down motion, after every few steps as they run along the ground. They are all graceful and very active birds which love the damp meadows and stream sides where they paddle and play in the shallow water. Their habit of constantly washing and bathing has earned for them the names of "Dishwasher" and "Washerwoman." The Pied Wagtail is the most common of the five different kinds of Wagtails found in Great Britain. It is a beautiful little bird, common in all parts of the British Isles. Although, like all its tribe, most often seen by the sides of streams or in the neighbourhood of water, it may also be met with in cultivated fields and even in gardens, where it soon becomes tame enough to feed with other birds on the scraps thrown out for the feathered visitors. The song is very pleasing, though low and soft and not very often heard. When hunting for flies and other insects the Pied Wagtail also utters a cry which sounds like "chissic, chissic." and so characteristic is this cry that in some districts the bird is known as the Chissic. The nest is built of grass and roots with a lining of wool or feathers. From four to six eggs are laid. These are greenish white, spotted with greyish brown.



## THE SWALLOW

THE Swallow is often called the messenger of spring, for when we see this bird on its arrival early in the year we know that the dark days of winter are passed and that warm, sunny weather may be expected. The Swallow reaches the shores of Great Britain towards the end of March or early in April, and leaves again for warmer countries, in which the winter months are spent, about September. There are two other common British birds which are often confused with the Swallow. These are the Martin and the Swift. The Martin is easily distinguishable by its shorter tail and by its plumage, which is black above and pure white below, and the Swift by its short tail and the sooty colour of all its feathers. The Swallow is a handsome bird, with very long wings and tail-streamers. The general colour of the upper parts is glossy steel-blue with the underparts creamy white. On the forehead and throat are patches of rich chestnut-brown and a broad band of blue covers the upper part of the breast. The feet are very small and the bird rarely settles on the ground, preferring to perch on telegraph wires or on tall trees from which it can take off with ease to hunt with amazing swiftness the flies and other flying insects on which it feeds.



## THE DIPPER

To see the Dipper in its home we must visit the rocky streams and rushing mountain torrents. Here it may be watched, as it flashes by, flying low over the water, or gambols among the rocks and boulders. This bird is as much at home in the water as on land and much of its food, consisting of water-beetles, worms, the grubs of dragon-flies and small shell-fish, is sought for on the bottoms of streams. Although its feet are not webbed, the Dipper is able to swim and dive with ease, using both its feet and wings to propel it through the water. This is a stoutly-built bird with plumage coloured in various shades of dark brown, except on the throat and upper part of the breast which are pure white. The nest is large and shaped like a ball. The outer wall is composed of green moss, with sometimes a few leaves or a little grass. Within this is a cup built of grasses and lined with dry leaves. Five eggs are laid in a clutch, clear white in colour. As a rule, the nest is placed in a hole or crevice in the rocky banks of the stream in which the Dipper finds its food, though nests built on the lower branches of trees are occasionally found.

CO. SCHOOLS  
C85900





## THE DRONGO

THE Indian Drongo or King Crow is well known to all who have visited India, for in that country it is one of the most common of birds. Its habit of perching in exposed positions and its boldness, bring it to the notice of the least observant, and it is as common in the towns as in the open country and on the hills. The whole of the plumage of the Drongo is glossy black. Its most remarkable feature is its tail, in which the outer pair of feathers are longer than the others and turned outward, at their tips. There are several other kinds of Drongos, and nearly all of them show some peculiarity in the formation of their tails. Thus in the Racket-tailed Drongo the two longest tail-feathers have long, bare shafts, bearing broad, racket-shaped expansions at their ends. In other species these feathers are curled upward at the tips or bend inward toward one another so that they form a sort of hoop. The Drongo makes its nest among the thick leaves of a tree, using sticks and grass as building materials. The eggs may be either white or pinkish cream in colour with or without faint markings. The food of the Drongo consists entirely of insects, many of which are captured in the air.



## THE TAILOR BIRD

IN general appearance the Tailor Bird is like a small, olive-green warbler. It is common in India, where it frequently visits gardens, and makes its presence known by its constant chirping and calling. The Tailor Bird is remarkable for its extraordinary method of making a nest. Taking two large leaves growing at the end of a branch, it pierces holes in their edges with its beak and literally sews the leaves together with the raw silk obtained from cocoons. Having done this it proceeds to fill the cup formed in this way with cottony down until a very cosy and warm nest results. Sometimes, when a specially large leaf is found, its edges are sewn together to receive the stuffing of down—no second leaf being used. Freshly-grown leaves are always selected by the Tailor Bird for the purpose of making its nest, for, of course, if old leaves were used they would be likely to wither and fall before the baby birds were out of the nest. There are several other small birds which make nests sewn in a similar way to that of the Tailor Bird, but none of these are so skilful, and their completed works lack the neatness and finish which is so marked a feature of the little Tailor.





## THE PRATINCOLE

ON several occasions this beautiful and graceful little bird has been found in Great Britain, but it is but an irregular visitor to these islands. Its true home is in the warmer European countries bordering the Mediterranean, Africa and parts of Asia. It nests in sand-banks or in slight hollows among grass, laying its three eggs on the bare ground. The Pratincole is a very agile bird darting and turning in the air in the manner seen in the Swallows and Terns. The wings are very long and the tail is deeply forked. The general colour of the plumage is warm shades of brown, paling to almost white beneath the tail and on the throat. A black stripe runs through the eye and continues downwards to encircle the pale area on the throat. The food of the Pratincole consists principally of beetles of various kinds, but flies and other insects are also caught and eaten. The voice of this bird is harsh, its general call resembling a hoarse croak. When danger threatens its nest or young it will scream shrilly and try to beat off the enemy with its wings and beak.



## THE GOLDFINCH

THE Goldfinch is one of the most beautiful of all British birds. It is generally distributed throughout the British Isles with the exception of the extreme north of Scotland, though there are many districts in which it is either rare or altogether absent. The Goldfinch is quite unlike any other of the finches. The head, face and throat are brilliant crimson, with a black cap and a streak of the same colour running through the eye. Surrounding these parts is an area of white which merges into the soft browns of the breast and back. The wings are black with bright bands of yellow, and most of the longer feathers are tipped with white. Like all finches, the Goldfinch is a seed-eater and is particularly fond of the seeds of thistles. In the late summer and autumn small parties of the birds may be seen feeding on the downy heads of these plants by the sides of country roads. At other times it seems to prefer the cultivated fields and is often found in gardens and orchards. In the spring, when young are in the nest, large numbers of insects are caught. The nest is a very neat and compact little structure composed of fine roots and grasses, lined with wool or plant-down. The five eggs are laid sometime in May, and are bluish white in colour with a few spots or streaks of ruddy brown.



## THE HAWFINCH

THE Hawfinch is the largest of the British finches. The large, heavy beak and sunken eye give the bird a curious appearance, while its size is sufficient to distinguish it at once from all other finches. In spite of its large size and powerful beak the Hawfinch is a very shy bird and is rarely seen even in districts in which it is common. The plumage is mostly brown in colour with a black bib under the chin and black wings and tail. A patch of white feathers occurs on the shoulders, and the brown of the breast fades into dingy white under the tail. The food of the Hawfinch consists of large seeds of various kinds, caterpillars and other insects. In the summer it often visits gardens to feast on peas and to rob the trees of cherries and other fruit. It is not the soft part of the cherry that the Hawfinch finds so much to its taste but the kernel contained in the "stone," and it has no difficulty in crushing the hard outer shell to get at this. The nest is placed in a tree or shrub and is built of small twigs with a lining of hair and roots. The eggs are greenish white blotched with dark brown. Five are usually found in a nest.





## THE HUMMING BIRD

AMONG the Humming Birds we find the smallest, as well as some of the most beautiful, of birds. The smallest measure little more than two inches in total length, and many of them are clothed in plumage which reflects metallic shades of purple, blue, green, gold and scarlet. Humming birds are found in Central and South America and feed on tiny insects, which they catch on the wing, and on the nectar of flowers, which they are able to suck from the blossoms by means of their long, delicate beaks. Many of these birds present a most remarkable appearance on account of the great development of some of their parts. Thus, in the Long-tailed Humming Bird one feather in each half of the tail is three or four times as long as the rest of the bird's body, while in the Racket-tailed Humming Bird two of the tail-feathers are so thin as to have the appearance of wires, broadening out at the ends into large racket-shaped plumes of bright purple. Humming Birds are extremely active little creatures, and spend the greater part of their lives in the air, rarely coming to rest or perching. When flying, the wings are quite invisible, so rapidly are they vibrated, and this, together with the minute proportions of some of the smaller kinds, causes them to look more like insects than birds.

THE END  
OF VOLUME FOUR

MADE AT THE  
TEMPLE PRESS  LETCHWOOD  
IN GREAT BRITAIN











